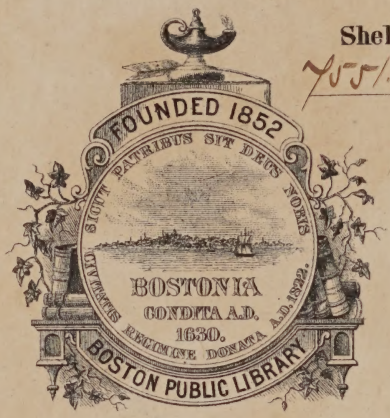
BOSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY
3 9999 08631 486 9



Shelf No.
757.67

Hellotype Printing Co.

Boston Public Library

Do not write in this book or mark it with pen or pencil. Penalties for so doing are imposed by the Revised Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

This book was issued to the borrower on the date last stamped below.

JAN 22 1949		

FORM NO. 609: 4,8,48: 200M.

From 5545.41

With the compliments
B. W. Chandler

Chno

THE

AUTHENTICITY OF THE GOSPELS.

REPRINTED FROM THE

NEW JERUSALEM MAGAZINE

For June, 1866.

C

BOSTON:

T. H. CARTER & SON.

THE

AUTHENTICITY OF THE GOSPELS.

7551.67

REPRINTED FROM THE

NEW JERUSALEM MAGAZINE

For June, 1866.

BOSTON:

T. H. CARTER & SON.

C

B.86.
171.304
Jan. 13, 1875.

THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE GOSPELS.

It is just twenty years since Mr. Greenleaf, the Royall Professor of Law in Harvard University, published his Examination of the Four Evangelists, by the Rules of Evidence Administered in Courts of Justice.* The learned author had previously obtained an enviable reputation by his Treatise on Evidence, which soon became a standard authority in the legal profession, and still maintains its position as one of the most elaborate, accurate and satisfactory works that has ever been written on the subject. In the work first above mentioned, it was not the author's design to enter upon any general examination of the evidences of Christianity, but to confine the inquiry to the testimony of the four Evangelists, bringing their narratives to the tests to which other evidence is subjected in human tribunals. Professor Greenleaf entertained the opinion, that, in subjecting the testimony of the sacred writers to these tests, one of the strongest foundations of Christian faith could be laid, and one that would be eminently satisfactory to men who are trained in habits of the severest logic by the actual character of their daily avocations. In this he was not singular. Mr. Justice Story, of the Supreme Court of the United States, and before him, Chief Justice Parsons, of Massachusetts, used to express themselves strongly in the same direction. It is doubtful if any legal writer could have illustrated the idea with greater ability than Mr. Greenleaf. A lawyer of great eminence, successful alike in the advocacy of causes before juries, and in the arguments of questions of law before the judges; possessed of great legal acumen, thoroughly read in his profession, and having the rare faculty of expressing his ideas with remarkable clearness and force, and withal a man of deeply religious sensibilities, he applied himself to the task he had proposed as the

---

* An Examination of the Testimony of the Four Evangelists, by the Rules of Evidence Administered in Courts of Justice, with an account of the Trial of Jesus. By Simon Greenleaf, LL.D., Royall Professor of Law in Harvard University. Boston: Little & Brown. 1846.

crowning effort of his life, with the greatest interest and the most earnest zeal.

The work was a failure. Not in style or method, nor yet in argumentation; but essentially a failure in this, that it did not meet the issue; or rather, it was an attempt to reconcile irreconcilable things—to apply certain rules of evidence to a class of subjects to which they have no sort of application.

The common law rules of evidence administered in courts of justice, are many of them essentially absurd when considered in the present state of jurisprudence and civil polity. They have grown up from, or grown out of, a state of semi-barbarism. They have been modified considerably by the results of experience, and by increasing sense in judicial investigations. But they were, to a certain extent, arbitrary, irreconcilable, inconsistent, and not seldom absurd. The author of *Amelia*, no mean authority on this very point, declared that no branch of the law was more bulky, more full of confusion and contradiction, and almost of absurdity, than the law of evidence. A great many able men have said things equally strong, and Mr. Bentham, as is well known, devoted his great talents especially to an exposition of the absurdities of this branch of jurisprudence. In treating of the artificial rules that had been adopted in various countries for the exclusion of certain kinds of testimony in courts of justice, he declared, that the divergence from natural equity had been complete, and stated it as his belief, that if all the grounds of exclusion were collected into one from the various systems, including the Gentoo and Chinese, no witness in any cause could possibly be examined at all. And it may be here remarked, that since Mr. Greenleaf's day, most important and radical changes in the rules of evidence have been introduced in England and America. These alterations have been most strongly opposed by able lawyers, who saw in them nothing but evil; although the practical effect has been to diminish litigation, aid in the establishment of justice, and facilitate the trial of causes: and, it may be safely said, that the universal sense of the bench and the bar is now in favor of the changes that have been made. In the light of these recent changes,

and of the experience under them, it is easy to see that the application of the old rules of evidence to aid in the establishment and defence of Christian truth, must result in failure; inasmuch as the subject is capable of such clearer, more consistent, and able treatment, and is rather weakened than strengthened by a course like this.

For instance, Mr. Greenleaf lays down the law in relation to the admissibility and proof of ancient writings with great clearness and ample learning; but when he undertakes to make the application of these principles to the writings of the Evangelists, where does the case stand? Where are the ancient writings? Where are even the copies of those writings, of a character suitable to be proved in a court of justice? When and where can they be produced, and who are the witnesses to identify them? "The first inquiry," he says, "when an ancient document is offered in evidence in our courts is, whether it is found in the place where, and under the care of persons with whom, such writings might naturally and reasonably be expected to be found. If they come from such a place, and bear no evident marks of forgery, the law presumes that they are genuine, and they are to be admitted to be read in evidence, unless the opposing party is able successfully to impeach them." Now suppose we apply this rule, where will it land us? Where are the ancient writings? In what control are they found? Where have they been kept? Not a scrap of anything exists that could by any possibility be admitted in a court of justice under this rule. Nobody doubts the fact that there was a man named Julius Cæsar, and that he wrote a famous book; but it would puzzle a lawyer of more acuteness and learning than Mr. Greenleaf to prove this in a court of justice by the established rules of evidence. When general historical facts are alluded to in the courts, they are sometimes admissible as facts known to the court, but not as facts capable of proof, as you would show the title to an estate. In truth this attempt and all attempts to sustain the Christian system on any such principles have a strong tendency to weaken the cause, by leading men who cannot fail to see the fallacy to suppose that the

evidence fails to support the case, when in truth the evidence is not applicable to the case. It neither proves it nor disproves it. It has nothing to do with it. We allude to the subject at length, because it is not uncommon to hear lawyers and judges speak of the subject in a watery way, as though the Christian system could be proved by the rules of evidence as administered in courts of justice, the direct tendency of which is, not only to confuse the mind of the unbeliever, but, in fact, to lower the character of the proofs on which he must rely. Professor Greenleaf performed his task with ability, but there never was an instance where the maxim was more applicable—*Ne sutor ultra crepidam.*

A work has been recently published by Mr. Fisher, the Professor of Church History in Yale College, on the Supernatural Origin of Christianity,* to which we desire to call the attention of our readers, because it is not only written with rare clearness and power, but exhibits a degree of candor and fairness that are somewhat unusual in works of this description. It shows conclusively, also, that the church is struggling with difficulties of an appalling character. Mere denunciation will not do. The character of the men who are now attacking the supernatural origin of Christianity—the ability displayed in this attack—the learning that is brought to bear, are such that those who rely on external evidences as the foundation of their faith feel the necessity of more than usual exertion. They are really alarmed, and they have reason to be alarmed. In the first place, as Mr. Fisher distinctly admits, the *tone* of the existing skepticism and unbelief is in remarkable contrast with that of other periods of the past. It is not disgraced by ribaldry. "The writers are men whose characters and lives forbid the idea that their unbelief is intended as an excuse for licentiousness." "In contrast with the past, unbelief is oftener now an

---

* Essays on the Supernatural Origin of Christianity, with special reference to the theories of Renan, Strauss and the Tubingen School. By Rev. George P. Fisher, M. A., Professor of Church History in Yale College. New York: Charles Scribner & Co., 124 Grand Street. 1866.

infection than a wilful attack. There are more at present who can be truly said to be *afflicted* with doubt. Just place Paine's *Age of Reason* by the side of Renan's newly published *Life of Christ!* The difference of the old infidelity from the new, is instantly felt by the dullest observer." He also admits, that "the comparative strength of the infidel party in our times is underrated by not a few even of Christian teachers." He alludes to "the subtler form which skepticism has assumed;" "though less tangible and pugnacious, it is more diffused, like an atmosphere." "A large number of the leaders of opinion on matters outside of the sphere of religion, are adherents, more or less outspoken, of the skeptical school." "Infidelity appears in better dress and better company than of old; it takes on the function of the educator and social reformer; it prefers a compromise with Christianity to a noisy crusade against it."

It may be remarked, in this connection, that some of the ablest attacks on the received doctrines of the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches have come from persons high in ecclesiastical authority. Without more than alluding to the famous *Essays and Reviews*, and Renan's Life of Christ, the recent work of Bishop Colenso is certainly a most severe blow at received opinions, for he announces most important discoveries of criticism bearing upon historical theology,—nothing less than evidences that the first six books of the Bible—the cornerstones of the whole Canon—were not written by their supposed authors, and are not historically true, much less divinely inspired and infallible. Bishop Colenso sums up the results of his work thus, as an accumulation of evidences:—

"*All the arguments drawn from an examination of the Pentateuch point in one direction.* There is literally *nothing* in these books distinctly indicative of Mosaic authorship. The whole force of the argument for that authorship rests upon tradition, and may be referred back to the opinion of the Jews who lived nearly a thousand years after the date assigned to Moses. It is not a question of *balanced internal evidence*, but a case where there is a *host* of indications, all tending to show diversity of authorship, and late date, and *none* discoverable by all the ingenuity yet brought to bear upon the subject, which tends decidedly the other way; and the supporters of the traditional view will be found to be constantly occupied, not in producing

internal evidence to show that Moses *did* write the Pentateuch, but in trying to account for the existence, on the assumption of his authorship, of so much internal evidence to the contrary." *

Mr. Fisher considers the question of the historical reality of scriptural miracles as involving the whole claim of Christianity to be a revelation. "Revelation and miracle are inseparable from each other." The Life of Christ by Strauss, he adds, is simply an elaborate attempt to set aside miracles by propounding some hypotheses more plausible than the old exploded theory of a wilful deception on the part of the early disciples. The Life of Christ by Renan is likewise little more than an effort to account for Christ and Christianity and the Christian Scriptures, without giving credence to miraculous events. We shall not stop here to consider the error of our author (for so we regard it) in the admission that the whole question turns on the authenticity of the miracles. This is the usual Protestant view; and the prominence given to that kind of evidence is nothing new. He regards the principal question in the controversy with unbelief, as an historical one. "We should make it our first aim to substantiate the great facts which are recorded in the New Testament, and which formed the pith and marrow of the apostles' testimony. We must meet the skeptic on the ordinary level of historical investigation, and bring before him the proof that the Gospel miracles w re actually performed, substantially as these histories of the New Testament narrate." To this question, as one of a purely historic fact, the author applies himself, with ability, learning and success. To New Churchmen there are other and more important considerations relating to the spiritual sense of the sacred writings. We believe them to be true, because the internal sense demonstrates them to be so. But still the merely external argument, the proof of this truth as we prove other facts, is important and interesting. It is important that a certain class of skeptics should be met on

---

* See p. 133 of the remarkable work of Frances Power Cobbe, entitled *Broken Lights: An Inquiry into the Present Condition and Future Prospects of Religious Faith.* Boston: Tilton & Co. 1864.

their own ground, and should be treated fairly in a discussion of the subject upon its merits, just as we would discuss any other event of the past.

It is not possible for us to state the argument, much less to allude to the proofs at any length. But the conclusion is irresistible that, as a purely historical question, the authenticity of the Gospels is as well established as any matter relating to the history of the past.

Upon this precise point the statement of Prof. Andrews Norton is of great weight. After a careful examination of the question, in which the objections of the unbelievers are fairly stated, and the whole argument as it stood in his time is clearly reviewed, he says :—

"The direct historical evidence for the genuineness of the Gospels consists in the indisputable fact, that throughout a community of millions of individuals, scattered over Europe, Asia and Africa, the Gospels were regarded with the highest reverence, as the works of those to whom they are ascribed, at so early a period, that there could be no difficulty in determining whether they were genuine or not, and when every intelligent Christian must have been deeply interested to ascertain the truth. And this fact does not merely involve the testimony of the great body of Christians to the genuineness of the Gospels ; it is in itself a phenomenon admitting of no explanation, except that the four Gospels had all been handed down as genuine from the apostolic age, and had everywhere accompanied our religion as it spread through the world." *

Mr. Fisher regards the Gospel of John as one of the main pillars of historical Christianity. The profoundest minds in the church, he says, from Clement of Alexandria to Luther, and from Luther to Niebuhr, have expressed their sense of the singular charm and surpassing value of this Gospel. Now the genuineness of this Gospel has, in recent times, been seriously impugned. It was denied to be the work of John by individual skeptics at the close of the last century. But this attack did not attract much attention. Nor did the question excite serious discussion until Bretschneider published (in 1820) his

---

* See *Norton's Evidences of the Genuineness of the Gospels.* Vol. 1. Additional notes, p. ccxc.

Probabilia. A more serious assault has recently been made by the critics of the Tübingen school, and there is now existing a most earnest controversy on this very point. The objecting critics insist that there was a radical difference and hostility between the Jewish and the Gentile types of Christianity,—between the party of the church that adhered to Peter and the original disciples, and the party that adhered to Paul and his doctrine: they ascribe several books of the New Testament to the effort made at a later day, to bridge over this gulf. The Acts of the Apostles, they insist, proceeds from this motive, and is a designed distortion and misrepresentation of events connected with the conflict about the rights of the gentile converts. And the fourth Gospel is a product of the same pacifying tendency. It was written, they argue, about the middle of the second century, by a Christian of gentile birth, who assumed the name of John, in order to give an apostolic sanction to his high theological platform, in which love takes the place of faith, and the Jewish system is shown to be fulfilled, and so abolished by the offering of Christ, the true paschal Lamb.

What then is the evidence of the authenticity of this Gospel? How do we know that it was really written by the beloved disciple of the Lord? Of course, there is nothing like immediate or positive proof, any more than there is of the Commentaries of Cæsar. There is no original manuscript which Mr. Greenleaf could bring into court. Nor is this the kind of evidence which is required by the nature of the case. Indeed, anything of the sort if offered would at once be rejected as an impudent forgery. Mr. Fisher has investigated the subject with learning, and handles it with considerable power.

In the first place, nobody disputes the fact of the universal reception of the fourth Gospel as genuine in the last quarter of the second century. At that time it was held in every part of Christendom to be the work of the Apostle John. The prominent witnesses are Tertullian in North Africa, Clement in Alexandria, and Irenæus in Gaul. Of the latter it should be remarked, that he was a Greek, born in Asia Minor, in the

year 140. Coming to Lyons, and holding there first the office of Presbyter, and then, in 178, that of Bishop, he was familiar with the church in both the East and the West. Moreover,—and this is a great point,—he had in his youth known and conversed with Polycarp of Smyrna, the immediate disciple of John, and retained a vivid recollection of the person and words of this remarkable man.

Now Irenæus not only testifies to the universal acceptance in the church of the fourth Gospel, but also argues—and this is certainly a suggestive fact to New Churchmen—that there *must* be four, and only four Gospels to stand as pillars of the truth. Then there was Origen, whose career terminated near the middle of the third century; but he was born but fifteen years before the end of the second, and of Christian parents. Then we have the Canon of Muratori, or the list of canonical books found in an old manuscript in the Milan Library, and which is certainly not later than the end of the second century, and the ancient Syriac version of the New Testament, the Peshito, having a like antiquity. In both of these monuments the Gospel of John is found in its proper place. Polycrates, the Bishop of Ephesus, in the year 196, alludes distinctly to the fourth Gospel, and quotes from it. Tatian, supposed to have been a pupil of Justin Martyr, although he swerved from his teaching, quotes repeatedly from John. Contemporary with Tatian was Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch in 169. He describes John's Gospel as a part of the Holy Scriptures, and John himself as a writer guided by the Holy Spirit. Going back to the first half of the second century, the writer most entitled to consideration is Justin Martyr, who was born in the year 89; and although a specious argument is made, that he quotes from other Gospels than the four now regarded as canonical, Mr. Fisher fairly shows that this is an error.

An important part of the external evidence for the genuineness of the fourth Gospel, is the tacit or express acknowledgment of the fact by the various heretical parties of the second century; and the author states as an important consideration, that the Artemonites, the party of Unitarians who came forward

in Rome near the end of the second century, did not think of disputing the apostolical origin of that Gospel to which their opponents were indebted for their strongest weapons. The great doctrinal battle of the church in the second century was with Gnosticism. The struggle with this first heresy of a Gentile origin began early. The germs of it are distinctly perceived in the apostolic age. At the middle of the second century the conflict with these elaborate systems of error was raging. By Justin, the Valentinians, the Basilideans, the Marcionites, and other Gnostic sects, are denounced as warmly as by Irenæus and his contemporaries. And by both of the parties in this wide-spread conflict by the Gnostics and the church theologians, the fourth Gospel is accepted as the work of John, without a lisp of opposition or doubt.

But more important, perhaps, than all the isolated passages of the early writers, is the argument drawn from the moral impossibility of discrediting, in such a case, the tradition of the early church. Upon this point the argument of Mr. Fisher is very interesting. We quote a portion of his remarks :—

"Few persons who have not specially attended to the subject, are aware how long a period is sometimes covered by a very few links of traditional testimony. Lord Campbell, in his 'Lives of the Chancellors,' remarks of himself that he had seen a person who had seen a spectator of the execution of Charles I., in 1649. A single link separated Lord Campbell from the eye-witness of an event occurring upwards of two hundred years before. Suppose this intervening witness to be known by Lord Campbell to be a discriminating and trustworthy person, and we have testimony that is fully credible. We borrow two examples from Mr. Palfrey's excellent 'History of New England.' The first relates to the preservation of the knowledge of the landing-place of the Pilgrims. 'Plymouth Rock,' says the historian, 'is now imbedded in a wharf. When this was about to be built, in 1741, Elder Thomas Faunce, then ninety-one years old, came to visit the Rock, and to remonstrate against its being exposed to injury; and he repeated what he had heard of it from the first planters. Elder Faunce's testimony was transmitted through Mrs. White, who died in 1810, ninety-five years old, and Deacon Ephraim Spooner, who died in 1818, at the age of eighty-three.' In another place, Mr. Palfrey has occasion to observe :—'When Josiah Quincy, of Boston, was twelve or thirteen years old, Nathaniel Appleton was still minister of Cambridge, and a preacher in the Boston pulpits; Appleton, born in Ipswich in 1693, had often sat, it is likely, on the

knees of Governor Bradstreet, who was his father's neighbor; and Bradstreet came from England, in John Winthrop's company, in 1630. Eyes that had seen men who had seen the founders of a cis-atlantic England, have looked also on New England, as she presents herself to-day.' Mr. Quincy died in 1864. Every man of seventy who can unite his memory with the memories of the individuals who had attained the same age when he was young, can go back through a period of more than a hundred years. He can state what was recollected fifty years ago concerning events that took place a half century before. If, in reference to a particular fact, we fix the earliest age of trustworthy recollection at fifteen, and suppose each of those, whose memories are thus united, to give their report at the age of eighty, there is covered a period of one hundred and thirty years. We can easily think of cases where, from the character of both the witnesses, the evidence thus derived would be entirely conclusive.

"But traditionary evidence had a special security and a special strength in the case of the early Christian Church. The church, as Mayer forcibly observes, had a physical and spiritual continuity of life. There was a close connection of its members one with another. 'Like a stream of water, such a stream of youths, adults, and old men is an unbroken whole.' The church was a community—an association. A body of this kind, says Mayer, recognizes that which is new, as new. It is protected from imposition. How would it be possible, he inquires, for a new Augsburg Confession to be palmed upon the Lutheran Churches as a document that had long been generally accepted?

"In estimating the force of this reasoning, we must take notice of the number of the early Christians. We must remember that at the close of the first century Christianity was planted in all the principal cities of the Roman Empire. It was in the great cities and centres of intercourse, as Jerusalem, Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth, Alexandria, Rome, that Christianity was earliest established. As early as Nero's persecution, (A. D. 64,) the Christians who were condemned constituted, according to Tacitus, a 'great multitude.' In Asia Minor, in the time of Trajan, or at the close of the century, they had become so numerous that, according to Pliny, the heathen temples were almost deserted. A century later, making due allowance for the rhetorical exaggeration of Tertullian, and not depending on him alone, we are certain that the number of the Christians had vastly multiplied. In every part of the Roman Empire, in all places of consideration, and even in rural districts, Christian assemblies regularly met for worship. And in all these weekly meetings the writings of the apostles were publicly read, as we learn from so early a writer as Justin Martyr.

"Now we have to look at the Christian churches in the second century, and ask if it was possible for a history of Christ, falsely pretending to be from the pen of the Apostle John, to be brought forward twenty, thirty, or forty years after his death, be introduced

into all the churches east and west, taking its place everywhere in the public services of Sunday? Was there no one to ask where this new Gospel came from, and where it had lain concealed? Was there no one, of the many who had personally known John, to expose the gigantic imposture, or even to raise a note of surprise at the unexpected appearance of so important a document, of which they had never heard before? How was the populous church at Ephesus brought to accept this work on the very spot where John had lived and died?"*

But we have already extended this article beyond the limits that we ought to devote to the discussion. We have alluded to the subject at length, and to some of the proofs educed in detail, in order to show more conclusively the struggle now going on among the religious sects as to the very foundation of their belief. The Bible itself is in apparent danger, and the attacks made upon it, as before remarked, are by men who cannot be answered by a sneer or turned aside by abuse,—by men who are themselves professing Christians, and by some who hold high positions in the church.

To us this contest is not in the least surprising; nor is it

---

* It may doubtless be surprising to some, that such an earnest effort should be made to disprove the authenticity of a writing that rests on evidence so clear as that of the fourth Gospel. But a slight acquaintance with literary history will show that the ablest men sometimes indulge in the most remarkable theories on kindred subjects. Thus, it is related of Lord Palmerston, that he entertained one of the most extraordinary paradoxes ever broached by a man of his intellectual calibre. He maintained that the plays of Shakspeare were really written by Bacon, who passed them off under the name of an actor, for fear of compromising his professional prospects and philosophical gravity. When, on a certain occasion, the positive testimony of Ben Jonson, in the verses prefixed to the edition of 1623, was adduced, he remarked: "Oh! these fellows always stand up for one another, or he may have been deceived like the rest." This opinion respecting the authorship of Shakspeare's Plays was entertained, as is well known, by an American lady of some celebrity, (Miss Bacon,) who wrote a large book in defence of it. We smile at a crotchet so absurd as this; but one familiar with all the proofs might well inquire why it is more absurd to deny the authenticity of these plays, than it is to call in question that of the Gospels. What more could Professor Greenleaf actually *prove*, by his method, in one case than in the other? Is the reasoning of Lord Palmerston and Miss Bacon any more absurd than that of the Tübingen School?

discouraging. To entertain doubts on these subjects is, to those who receive the doctrines of Swedenborg, simply impossible. The external arguments in favor of the authenticity of the Gospels we regard as sound and unanswerable. We also believe the facts stated by the Evangelists to be literally true. But besides and beyond all this, we believe that the Gospels, like the rest of the Word, were written strictly according to the doctrine of Correspondence, and that they contain within the letter an internal sense, which bears the same relation to the external or literal sense that the soul does to the body. Whatever apparent inconsistencies there may be in the Gospels considered as narrations of facts, there is no inconsistency in the internal sense, which is one, complete and effective. It was the special mission of Swedenborg to open or explain this internal sense of the Word. This he did, not on his own authority. His explanations are not like those of mere commentators on the Bible. They are not capricious, or arbitrary, or changeable. But he opens a system or a science according to which the Scriptures were written. He develops a plenary inspiration, more wonderful than any discoveries in science or the arts,—a system which proves itself, or rather, which would show any fallacy on his part, and would certainly expose him, if his own explanations are not consistent with the system and with himself.

Whatever assaults, therefore, may be made on the Word; whatever inconsistencies may be pointed out in the literal sense; however absurd the statements therein contained may be alleged to be, they do not in the least affect our faith in the plenary inspiration, simply because they do not reach it. They are all on a lower plane. "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." We believe the miracles to be true. But we do not rely on them, nor pin our faith to them, nor admit for a moment that, if they are not substantiated, the Gospels are not revelations from God. On the contrary, we regard the latter as living truths, speaking to us now, commanding men everywhere to repent, aiding them in a life for heaven,—a most precious fountain of truth and full of wonderful things, so that

if all were explained in detail, the whole world would not contain the books that must be written.

Nothing more surprises recent converts to our faith, than the apparent indifference of theologians to the principles on which Swedenborg shows the Scriptures to have been written. They make an infinite deal of research into the local traditions of the past; they ransack the whole field of history; they bury themselves in the speculative theories of half barbaric ages; they spend years in the infinitely minute learning of philologists; but when a man of pure life, of exalted station, and of great learning, develops the simplest possible theory of Scripture inspiration, he scarcely obtains a hearing from these theological investigators, or his claims are turned aside with a sneer. On the other hand, the entire confidence with which our doctrines are held by the receivers of them, and the scarcely perceptible impression which opposition or denial of their truth makes upon us, is sometimes matter of surprise and comment to those outside of the church.

But neither of these circumstances is remarkable. That those who are wedded to the old theological dogmas, and particularly that men of learning should look with suspicion and aversion upon the doctrine of Correspondence, which opens the internal sense of the Scriptures, and which renders a great deal of the church literature and theological discussions of no more consequence than the solemn nonsense of the school-men in the Middle Ages, is not remarkable. Nor, on the other hand, is the firmness of belief of New Churchmen justly attributable to bigoted intolerance or narrow self-conceit. If we desire to enter a room which is known to be fastened by a lock of peculiar construction, and a person exhibits a key and expatiates on its merits and asserts that it will unlock the door, and goes into a long explanation of the character and structure of the lock, we may believe him or not, according to our understanding of the subject; but if he actually *applies the key and opens the door before our eyes*, there is an end of argument. We pass into the room, and wonder at those who remain behind discussing the method of opening the door. When Swedenborg

asserts that the Word has an internal sense, and develops the system on which it was written, and furnishes the key; when those who apply it find the wonderful things he relates to be actually so; when they perceive, that, whatever may be the difficulties of the literal Scriptures, whatever apparent inconsistencies may exist, these all disappear in the internal sense, they have passed to a higher plane, and are not affected by arguments and disputes of those who still remain on the lower one. Nor is the simplicity of the doctrine of correspondences, according to which the Word is written, or the apparent difficulty of its application, a matter that should discourage those who are disposed to examine it. Most great discoveries have been remarkable for their simplicity, and, sometimes, even for their accidental occurrence. The falling of an apple is said to have led the philosopher to discover the great laws of gravitation, which effected an entire revolution in philosophical investigations, and rendered utterly useless, if not ridiculous, the discoveries of the learned for ages. Nor is it reasonable to expect, that, although the principle on which the Word is written is plain and simple,—namely, that of an exact correspondence between things spiritual and natural,—the application of this principle is to be made in a day, or by every person who undertakes it. The doctrine opens a vast field of inquiry. It shows the Bible to be not merely the most wonderful book ever written, but it shows that it is more wonderful than anything else we see in the world, as the Word of the Lord must be above His mere works as exhibited in nature. No educated man now denies the doctrine of attraction or gravitation; but because he receives this, does he think he can at once comprehend all the wonders of creation? Does he who believes in the modern theory of the planetary system, therefore or thereby become a learned astronomer? And because he does not, will he therefore reject the theory, and go back to the dark ages?

Meanwhile, the truth will hold its own. The doubts which are experienced in regard to the received canon; the assaults that are made upon the Gospels; the absolute denial of their

authenticity by men who profess to be Christians, will tend to separate the real from the factitious. Theologians are put upon their good behavior. Denunciations, assertions, objurgations, will pass for what they are worth. There is a spirit of inquiry abroad that will not be satisfied in this way. Nor will thinking and earnest men be content with mere external evidences. The work of Mr. Fisher is able and candid, as far as it goes; but it does not reach a growing difficulty. The same kind of reasoning might be applied to Cæsar's Commentaries, or Xenophon's Anabasis, and would, or ought to be, entirely satisfactory as to the authenticity of such works. But after all, in matters affecting the eternal welfare of men, they desire something more. It is easy to admit the authenticity of works, which, if they be not authentic, are of no special consequence. But in regard to Gospels which come with a claim of Divine power, or which command us in matters of vast consequence, we need something higher.

Undoubtedly this something is obtained to a certain extent by a study of these books, and by a life in conformity to their precepts. But when, in addition to this, it is understood that the Word is all written upon a fixed system, that the internal sense is the important matter, and that this is harmonious and clear, surely here is a foundation upon which the earnest inquirer may rest secure from the assaults of the wicked or the doubts of the unbelieving.

P. W. C.

1/15